

Policy 3195 (a)

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

MEAL CHARGING POLICY

The Waterford Board of Education recognizes the importance of providing nutritious food to students in the Waterford Public Schools.

The Board is a sponsor of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services' Child Nutrition Programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the District shall adhere to the federal and state guidelines and regulations pertaining to these school Child Nutrition Programs. In accordance with federal law, the Board will make a public announcement and notify parents and guardians of the eligibility criteria for free and reduced price meals and provide information regarding how a household may make an application for these benefits. Such notice and application will generally be distributed at the beginning of each school year.

Food Services Charging Policy

In accordance with state and federal standards, the Waterford Board of Education conforms to applicable grant standards for providing free and reduced price meals to elementary and secondary students enrolled in the District's schools.

Charging Meals

The District uses an automated prepayment system for student meal accounts. Students whose accounts have insufficient funds, and who do not bring a meal or other funds to school to pay for meals, may charge meals to their meal accounts. Students will be informed of their right to purchase a meal, which excludes a la carte items, for any school breakfast, lunch or other meal offered by the District, even if the student's account has insufficient funds.

The Board prohibits publicly identifying or shaming a student for any unpaid meal charges, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Delaying or refusing to serve a meal to such student;
- Designating a specific meal option for the student; or
- Otherwise taking any disciplinary action against the student

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Collection of Unpaid Meal Charges

The District's efforts to recover from households money owed due to the charging of meals must not have a negative impact on the children involved and shall focus primarily on the adults in the household responsible for providing funds for meal purchases. The District shall consider whether the benefits of potential collections outweigh the costs that would be incurred to achieve those collections.

For purposes of this policy, "delinquent debt" means unpaid meal charges.

The District will contact the parents/guardians of students who charge meals to their meal accounts in order for the District to collect the delinquent debt. The first such communication will be a recorded message reminder made through a robocall, after number of meal(s) have been charged. Subsequent written and verbal communications with parents/guardians concerning delinquent debt will be made by the building administrator or designee, as may be necessary and appropriate. All communications regarding unpaid meal charges shall be made directly and discreetly to parents/guardians. Written communications with parents/guardians regarding collection of a student's unpaid meal charges shall include information on local food pantries and the Connecticut Department of Social Services' supplemental nutrition assistance program, and a link to the District's or Town's website that lists any community services available to Town residents.

In the event a student's unpaid meal charges are equal to or more than the cost of thirty (30) meals, the parents/guardians of such student will be referred to the District's homeless education liaison.

The Board shall comply with applicable federal and state laws and other federal or state requirements concerning the collection of unpaid meal charges. The Board may accept gifts, donations or grants from any public or private sources for the purpose of paying off any unpaid charges for school lunches, breakfasts or other such feeding.

Adult Payment for Meals

Adults are not permitted to charge meals and must either pay for meals at time of service or through use of a pre-payment system made available by the district.

Student Payment for Meals

Students shall either pay for meals at time of service or through use of a pre-payment system, online or at the school, made available by the district.

If elementary students have insufficient money for meals, in accordance with the standards set forth in this policy, they may charge meals in compliance with procedures set in place by the administration.

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Student Fees, Fines, Charges or Refunds

Any Bank fees incurred will be added to outstanding meal debt. This will apply to any payments made by check that are returned to the district by the bank with the notice of “insufficient funds” (NSF). All accounts must be settled at the end of the school year.

When a check is returned for insufficient funds (NSF) a letter will be sent to inform the parent(s) from the Food Service Director. Payment for the NSF check must be in the form of a cashier’s check, cash or money order. Payment must be received within ten (10) days of the date of the letter and include monies owed plus any bank penalty fee and will be made payable to: Waterford Food Service. Send to: School Dining & Nutrition Office 15 Rope Ferry Road, Waterford CT.

If an NSF payment is not received for balances owed with no response from the parent or guardian, the business manager may take over collection actions.

Second requests will be sent from the business manager. Once the town has received an NSF check from the bank, the parent will no longer be allowed to pay by personal check; only cash, a cashier’s check or money order will be accepted.

Students with unused credit in their accounts at the point of disenrollment or graduation will be transferred to a siblings account.

Refunds are available upon a written request or email. Funds may also be donated. Gifts or donated funds are accepted for the purpose of offsetting delinquent student meal accounts. Donations will be applied to outstanding debt owed by reduced status students first.

Withdrawn Students: For any student who is withdrawn, a written request or email must be submitted with a forwarding address if applicable.

Funds can also be transferred to a sibling’s account with a written request, e-mail or verbal request at any time.

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Limitations on Charging Meals

Parents/guardians may pre-pay for their child's meals through an account set up for this purpose. Elementary students whose account has insufficient funds to cover a meal may charge one meal creating a negative balance of up to a maximum of 5 paid lunches. When the maximum amount is reached notification of a negative balance will be sent on a weekly basis via phone call or the automatic notification system to the parents/guardians.

In the event that parents owe cafeteria charges at the end of the school year, the district will hold official copies of report cards, diplomas or school records until such charges are paid in full.

Funds from the school food service account will not be used to cover the cost of charged meals that have not been repaid.

USDA Non- Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal Civil Rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Civil Rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior credible activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible

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Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Dissemination of Policy

This policy shall be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring to the District during the school year. This policy shall be provided to all District staff responsible for its enforcement. In addition, school social workers, nurses, the homeless liaison, and other staff members assisting children in need or who may be contacted by families with unpaid meal charges shall be informed of this policy.

The District shall maintain, to the extent required by law, documentation of the methods used to communicate this policy to households and District staff responsible for policy enforcement.

The District shall provide this policy to the Connecticut State Department of Education during Administrative Reviews.

The Superintendent or designee may, if necessary and appropriate, develop administrative regulations in furtherance of this policy.

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Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-215 Lunches, breakfasts and other feeding programs for public school children and employees. State of Connecticut, Department of Education, School Health, Nutrition and Family Services Operational Memorandum No. 11-22, "Connecticut Statutory Requirements for Unpaid Meal Charges in Public Schools," June 15, 2022.

State of Connecticut, Department of Education, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education Operational Memorandum No. 4-17, "Guidance on Unpaid Meal Charges and Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments," Nov. 2, 2016.

Federal law:

7 C.F.R. Part 210 National School Lunch Program.

7 C.F.R. Part 220 School Breakfast Program.

7 C.F.R. Part 245 Determining Eligibility for Free and Reduced Price Meals and Free Milk in Schools.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Policy Memo SP 46-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policy," July 8, 2016.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Policy Memo SP 47-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments," July 8, 2016.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Policy Memo SP 57-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A," Sept. 16, 2016.

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WATERFORD PUBLIC

Waterford, Connecticut